

## **MOLD AND MOISTURE IN INNER CITY HOUSING - CHICAGO**

**Illinois Department of Public Health**

**Year of Grant: 1999**

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The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has partnered with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA), the University of Illinois' Building Research Council (BRC), the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), and the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County (CEDA) to conduct a Mold and Moisture Control Project in inner-city housing of Chicago, Illinois. IDPH and its partners are conducting this demonstration project because demographic, socioeconomic and housing characteristics of Chicago can reasonably be correlated with childhood respiratory illnesses caused or aggravated by exposure to mold, lead-based paint, and other housing problems.

Between April 1992 and January 1995, seven cases of acute pulmonary hemorrhage of unknown etiology were diagnosed among infants in three Chicago area hospitals. To date, as many as thirteen cases of infant idiopathic lung hemorrhage have been reported in Chicago area homes and two of these cases have been fatal. Cook County also has one of the highest mortality rates from asthma in the country, with most deaths occurring in the City of Chicago. Since 1979, the annual number of asthma deaths in Chicago has steadily increased from 50 to 124 in 1996 despite a declining overall population (*Chicago Asthma Consortium*, 1999). Children (0 - 17) are unduly affected by the disease in Illinois as they account for 43% of the total hospitalizations (25,347) but only 25% of the population. In Chicago, children represented almost half of the hospitalizations due to asthma (11,465, 45.6%) in 1997.

According to 1990 Census Data, approximately 95% of the housing units in Chicago were constructed before 1978 and 59% were constructed before 1950. An estimated 303,242 households reported incomes less than 80% of the median household income, and nearly 108,634 households reported incomes less than 55,000, placing them at risk of homelessness. In addition, 35% of the 258,846 children less than six years of age in Chicago, lived in poverty.

A high degree of coordination already exists between the participants in this project. Each of the participants has worked together in the past on similar projects. For example, CEDA has worked with IDPH, DCCA, BRC, and UIC in the past on LBP hazard reduction interventions, coordinating agencies involved with housing rehabilitation, housing and health codes, and related housing programs. IDPH and UIC have worked very closely in the past on many environmental health research, intervention, and educational projects, such as a study of a cluster of pulmonary hemorrhages in Chicago in 1994-6. The Project Director has been directly responsible for developing the partnerships for the *Get the Lead Out* LBP hazard reduction program and for this project assuring a high degree of coordination.

IDPH was awarded \$850,000 in federal funds, matched by \$234,339 in local funds or in-kind services, to operate a 36-month project which will provide low-cost moisture control services and education materials about moisture, mold, and other related "healthy home" problems and their solutions to 25 families in Chicago. All 25 homes will also receive intensive environmental, biological, and medical monitoring as part of an applied research project to determine the effectiveness of the intervention measures and delivery systems developed. Lessons from the applied research project will be applied to improving a cost-effective moisture intervention delivery system integrated with existing weatherization and housing rehabilitation programs